STATE OF IDAHO
Fish and Game Department

Joseph C. Greenley, Director

Quarterly Project Progress Report

CLEARWATER RIVER DEVELOPMENT OF

SPRING CHINOOK STOCKS

Project No. 88272402 Contract No. 03-5-208-00025

Period Covered: April 1, to June 30, 1975

Columbia River Fisheries Development Program

August, 1975

Clearwater River Development of Spring Chinook Stocks

ABSTRACT:

Indian Creek was the only channel utilized in the Region the entire year due to the lack of chinook eggs. Traps were installed later than usual and chinook fry enumeration was disappointingly low. Approximately 117,000 chinook smolts from Rapid River Hatchery were released in various sections of the South Fork Clearwater River.

REPORT OF PROGRESS:

Intra-gravel investigation during my April 23rd trip to Indian Creek channel showed numerous alevins present and I estimated 10 to 15 days before first emigration. I asked West Fork Ranger District personnel, whom we were paying to monitor the channel, to install the trap by May 6th.

On May 5th, I called West Fork to inquire if the trap had been installed and found no personnel could be released to complete the work. I informed the District I would be in on the 8th to install the trap. On that date the channel tender and I snowmobiled into Magruder and picked up the trapping facilities at the old Ranger Station. We ran out of snow, however, near Beaver Point and had to backpack the traps the remaining five miles. We installed the traps and I instructed the tender to line the facility with plastic sheeting to insure all fry escape routes would be blocked. The tender and his supervisor at West Fork were instructed on fry transportation techniques and distribution areas. The tender was also instructed to call me in Lewiston when approximately 100,000 fry had been enumerated so arrangements could be made to transport fry by helicopter to remote areas. I anticipated substantial numbers of fry emigrating from the channel soon after trap installation and when I didn't hear from the tender the next week, I became concerned. I called the next Monday to find out what had been transpiring and found only 30,000 fry had been enumerated. I knew this was a misleading count; therefore, I traveled to Magruder the 21st, which was the first day Nez Perce Pass was open to traffic, and found the plastic had not been placed over the trapping area as instructed. Close scrutiny produced a hole in the concrete floor which had previously been unnoticed. Several thousand fry which had recently escaped were present immediately below the trapping facility. I immediately placed plastic over the trapping area and sealed the avenue of escape. The next morning I counted over 32,000 fry from the facility.

There is no exact method for determining the amount of fry that had escaped. I did, however, attempt to estimate survival by correlating Spring, 1974 to Spring 1975 in which snow conditions, run-off conditions, and timing were very comparable. There was also an excellent correlation between numbers of eyed eggs planted; 2,002,000 in the Fall of 1973, and 2,029,000 in the Fall of 1974.

During the 1974 fry enumeration year, the traps were installed May 1st. By May 22nd, there had been 486,000 fry enumerated from the channel. The season total for 1974 was 962,335 fry.

By May 2, 1975, there had been 30,000 fry enumerated from the channel; a difference of 456,000 fry from 1974. The channel was technically shut down on July 1, 1975, with 309,000 fry trapped and enumerated from the channel and an estimated 5,000 fry still in the channel or an enumeration percentage of fourteen. If the 314,000 fry is added to the 456,000 possible escapes you get 770,000 surviving fry for a total percentage of thirty-eight, which correlates favorably with 1974. I believe the 770,000 total is minimal when considering the extend and condition of fry observed prior to installation of traps. The validity of this comparison is questionable but it is all I had to work with. The fry that escaped cannot be considered a "loss" as they will propagate the main Selway for several miles below Indian Creek.

Fry transplants from Indian Creek channel are contained in Table 1.

Table 1. Indian Creek Hatching Channel Chinook Fry Transplants, 1975

Release date	Release site	Number of fry
May 29	Storm Creek Flat	77,435
May 29	Magruder Crossing	9,265
June 4	Cooper's Flat	84,000
June 4	Magruder Ranger Station	12,000
June 17	Hells Half Bridge	16,300
June 26	Pete Creek	19,000
July 5	Magruder Crossing	7,000
May & June	Selway River at channel	83,982
	TOTAL	309,000

A flat fee of $1,500 was paid the West Fork Ranger District for the responsibility of regulating and maintaining flows, plus enumeration and distribution of fry about the Magruder area. An additional $200 was used to aid in opening the road over Nez Perce Pass.

Chinook Smolt Releases

About 117,000 chinook smolts from Rapid River Hatchery were released in various sections of the South Fork Clearwater River and tributaries during April (Table 2).

Table 2. Spring Chinook Smolts Released in South Fork Clearwater River, 1975.

Date	Location	Number per pound	Amount
April 9	Newsome Creek	19.5	40,950
April 9	Crooked River	19.5	40,750
April 10	Deadwood Bridge	19.5	11,700
April 10	Red River R.S.	19.5	23,400
	TOTAL		117,000

About 50,000 of the Rapid River smolts were branded with a 1 ▲ for downstream identification and when returning as adults. There appeared to be a slightly greater transportation mortality on branded fish, though not of significant proportions.

Selway Falls Fishway

On April 15, Grant Christensen and several of the original designers of Selway Falls Fishway, which included Milo Bell, and I made an inspection trip of Selway Falls fish passage facilities. The orifices within the fish passage tunnel have been plugging with sticks and other debris. The orifices on occasion have plugged within a week after being cleaned. Department personnel do not have the time to monitor the fishway as often as is required. Some modification at the entrance or within the fishway is required to insure continued fish passage. An individual is going to be hired to periodically clean the tunnel but that will not be the solution to the problem The engineers stated they would try and determine what could be accomplished. No comments have been received since then.

Submitted by:

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